



Transportation

December 2016 Newsletter

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Division II

COUNTIES SERVED | Alleghany, Ashe, Avery,  
Caldwell, Surry, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin



NCFS - Firefighters walk along a road closed by the Party Rock Fire in Rutherford County.

### Wildfires Close Short Stretches of Roads in Western North Carolina

ASHEVILLE - At times, the signs could barely be seen through the smoke and the haze. But the message communicated was clear: Road Closed.

Department of Transportation crews posted a handful of digital message boards in Western North Carolina that roads were closed due to wildfire during November.

More than 20 separate wildfire complexes scorched in excess of 70,000 acres and forced neighborhood evacuations from Swain County to McDowell County and pockets of North Carolina with hazardous air quality.

Despite the devastation, only four major highways needed to be closed. Transportation officials worked with various agencies to organize the closures and set up marked

### Stay Connected



### On This Episode of NC Transportation Now:

NCDOT employees were recognized for their heroism. [Click here](#) for more information and for more new stories.

### We Need Your Input!

The N.C. Department of Transportation has opened the department's second annual customer survey.

All citizen feedback will be collected online at [go.ncsu.edu/customerservice2016](http://go.ncsu.edu/customerservice2016).

The survey takes 15 minutes to complete and the survey link is mobile friendly.

The N.C. General Assembly requires the survey to gauge how the transportation department is providing great customer service.

Participation can help NCDOT identify ways to make North Carolina transportation services safer, more efficient and customer focused.

The online survey will close December 31.

detours.

A seven-mile stretch of U.S. 64/74A and N.C. 9 in Rutherford County - the main route through Chimney Rock Village and Lake Lure - closed on Nov. 11 due to the Party Rock Fire. The same fire closed a shorter stretch of N.C. 9 on Nov. 16. Both opened on the evening of Nov. 20 and allowed business to open the next day for residents and visitors.

A fire in Swain County closed 14 miles of U.S. 74/N.C. 19 through the Nantahala Gorge for about 48 hours starting on Nov. 12. In McDowell County, the Clear Creek Fire forced the closure of N.C. 80 from Old Toms Creek to the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Horton Fire in Watauga County burned 1,500 acres and required the closure of some secondary and private roads.

In all, less than 35 miles of roads were closed to help crews battle the wildfires, which consumed more than 110 square miles of land in Western North Carolina. Governor McCrory declared a state of emergency and a burn ban on Nov. 11 and transportation officials reminded motorists of the ban through digital messaging on message boards on freeways in the mountains.

"We were able to help and do our part with the closures and the detours," Division 13 Maintenance Engineer Mark Gibbs said. "We were happy to assist our friends at the N.C. Forest Service, the U.S. Forest Service and all of the local agencies."



**NCDOT Crews Prepare for Winter Weather**

Winter is approaching and that means N.C. Department of Transportation is preparing for rough road conditions. When snow and ice are in the forecast, DOT has more than 1,700 dump trucks fitted with sand and salt spreaders, 495 front-end loaders and backhoes, and 332 motor graders to use throughout the state as needed.

Most importantly, more than 3,200 specially trained employees are available to assist with the hazards associated with winter weather. Earlier this fall, each county in Division 11 participated in a Snow-Day prep day which consisted of loading sand spreaders on to dump trucks, fixing plows to the front of trucks and driving routes that will be maintained during winter weather.

The results will be available to the public on NCDOT.gov in 2017.

## **Seat Belt Violations Given Over Thanksgiving Holiday**

**RALEIGH** - State and local law enforcement officers issued 1,961 seat belt and 340 child passenger violations during the Governor's Highway Safety Program's Thanksgiving *Click It or Ticket* enforcement campaign on Nov. 20-26.

"No one ever plans to be in a traffic crash, so the *Click It or Ticket* campaign is about saving lives and changing the way people think," said Don Nail, director of the Governor's Highway Safety Program. "The seat-belt enforcement efforts are about reminding people that failing to buckle-up is not worth risking a ticket, a traffic crash, or your life."

Over the holiday enforcement period, state and local law enforcement agencies held 2,786 checkpoints and stepped-up patrols, issuing 3,209 traffic and criminal violations. The top five counties for occupant restraint violations were:

- Wake County: 210
- Guilford County: 100
- Robeson County: 100
- Forsyth County: 99
- Lenoir County: 96
- Cabarrus County: 90

In its 23rd year, the *Click It or Ticket* education and enforcement campaign reminds motorists that wearing a seat belt is the single most effective action that a person can take to save their life. The campaign aims to increase driver seat belt usage rates and reduce fatalities across North Carolina and has yielded significant results over



Motorists are urged to stay off the roads during winter storms. For more information on how to stay safe on winter roads, check the [NCDOT Safe Driving Tips](#).

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### **Hurricane Continues to Impact Central, Eastern Parts of State *Recovery to Continue into 2017***

Hurricane Matthew continues to impact eastern and central North Carolina.

More than 600 roads in the state were damaged by the Oct. 8 hurricane. Transportation workers have been tirelessly assessing and repairing the damage.

At press time, approximately 153 roads remain affected from hurricane damage throughout eastern North Carolina. Debris removal, shoulder repairs and pipe replacements will likely continue throughout December and into 2017. Some construction projects will be completed in the spring when conditions improve for paving.

the years. Between 2010 and 2014, an average of 545 lives were saved per year due to the use of seat belts in passenger vehicles.

The overall seat belt usage rate for North Carolina increased from 89.9 percent in 2015 to 91.7 percent in 2016. The Governor's Highway Safety Program believes that increased enforcement efforts from law enforcement and the expansion of public awareness campaigns will result in maintaining a high usage rate.

For county by [county totals](#) and more information regarding the [Click It or Ticket](#) program, contact Jonathan Bandy at 919-814-3657, or visit the [GHSP website](#).

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### **Save \$\$\$ on Holiday Travel**

RALEIGH - The holidays are here, which means travelers will be hitting the road to visit friends and family. To help you save time and money on your road trips this holiday season - while also being great stocking stuffers - [NC Quick Pass](#) is dropping the price of its E-ZPass compatible transponders. Save 50 percent on your transponder purchase, paying just \$10 with this winter promotion that runs Dec.1 through Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2017.

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### **Christmas Driving Tips**

As Christmas approaches, the Department of Transportation has some tips for navigating the highways safely during your travels.

\* Leave early to get a head start.  
Travel at non-peak hours if

For real time information on roads, check the Traveler Services section on [www.ncdot.gov](http://www.ncdot.gov) or follow NCDOT on Twitter.

## NOTABLE NEWS RELEASES

[N.C. Division of Aviation Social Media Lifts Off](#)

[State Road Bridge Getting Replaced](#)

[NCDOT Helping Traffic Flow at Christmas Town, USA](#)

[Applications for Ocracoke Vendor Passes Now Available](#)

[Ferry Dredge Manteo Completes First Assignment](#)

[Get Informed on Drone Safety This Holiday Season](#)

possible.

- \* Stay alert.

- \* Be patient and obey the speed limit.

- \* Use alternative routes, when possible, to avoid traffic congestion.

- \* Stay informed. Real time travel information is available at [www.ncdot.gov](http://www.ncdot.gov) or you can follow NCDOT on Twitter.

- \* Don't drive drowsy. Travel at times you are normally awake, and take frequent breaks.

- \* Avoid distracted driving.

## Share the NCDOT Division Newsletters with Friends

Your friends and family can sign up for their division newsletters by [clicking here on the NCDOT website.](#)

**David Uchiyama**

Division 11 Communications Officer

Phone: (828) 251.6171

[duchiyama@ncdot.gov](mailto:duchiyama@ncdot.gov)

**Mike Pettyjohn**

Division 11 Engineer

**James R. Palermo**

Division 11 Transportation Board Member

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